

MORMON MEN OF MOFFETT

By PRIVATE MERVIN L. TANNER



ROSTER OF THE MORMON MEN OF MOFFETT

First row, left to right: Sherman Turner, Salt Lake City, Utah; Jack Gardner, Gridley, California; Alma Jones, Brigham City, Utah; Vern Brewster, Salt Lake City, Utah; Wallace Hight, Farmington, Utah. Second row, left to right, Grant Stephens, Butte, Montana; Charles S. Lee, Salt Lake City, Utah; Earl Nielsen, Sacramento, California; Dale Nielsen, Ephraim, Utah; John Lilliver, Salt Lake City, Utah; Ben Smith, Rexburg, Idaho. Third row, left to right, George Hackett, Utah; Leonard Hulet, Utah; George London, Utah; Boyd Jesson, Murray, Utah; Keith Christiansen, Monroe, Utah. Fourth row, left to right: Ivan H. Thomas, Blackfoot, Idaho; Horace B. Thompson, St. George, Utah; Ben Latham, Rexburg, Idaho; Mervin Tanner, Brigham City; Millard Owens, Delta, Utah; Dee Peterson, Logan, Utah; and Stephen Stanford Logan, Utah.

THE majority of Latter-day Saint boys first set foot at Moffett Field feeling lonely and forgotten, not knowing where to turn or what to do. Each felt he was just another rookie in uniform. In town he was just another soldier. More than at any other time he found himself vulnerable to evil. It was so easy to find himself in a circle where the common gesture of friendship was the passing around of a cigarette pack or the invitation to a drink, or the offer to make introductions to that "cute blond downtown."

But in one tent at Moffett Field there was a combination of circumstances that changed all this. While planes were flying overhead and cadets were learning to fly these birds of war, the "Mormon Men of Moffett" were planning an organization which was to prove one of their greatest achievements since the beginning of their army life. On the eve of September 7, 1941, they held their first meeting in an atmosphere that might have sent a challenge to those swirling props overhead. The boys were seated on cots and foot-lockers. A single light dangled from the center of the tent; splashed its glow over almost thirty youthful, healthy, young men clad in olive drab uniforms. This was the beginning of the "Three M Club," and now that the initial step had been taken the desire to make it a success was predominant.

The tent where the first meeting was held boasted a rare characteristic. Religion in an army camp is more a matter of individual concern than anything else, and when five Latter-day Saint missionaries, just by chance mind you,

find themselves sharing the same tent, it is exceedingly unusual. But such was the case. Red-headed Ben Leatham from Rexburg, Idaho, acting Club chairman before officers were elected, was one of the quintet. He had served a mission in the Eastern States. Ren Smith, also from Rexburg, Idaho, had served in the Spanish-American Mission. Sherman Turner, former resident of Salt Lake City, had begun a mission in Holland and was later sent back to the Central States when trouble began in Europe. Vern Brewster, from Salt Lake City, had begun a mission in Norway and completed it in the North Central States. And the last of this quintet was Horace B. Thompson from St. George, Utah, who had served a mission in Australia. From the date of that first meeting up until the present time, although they have been moved at various times, these five have always been fortunate in keeping together and consequently after three months their tent is still a headquarters for Three M Club activities.

To shape the club into a functioning unit it was first necessary to discuss many details and decide upon a definite plan of action. Every member must be encouraged to attend Church functions as a means of spiritual enlightenment and recreation. Club meetings would be held every Monday after duties of the post had been dispensed with. Monthly fees for each person would be fifty cents.

With this plan in mind and with a humble prayer for guidance officers were elected. Among the group was

Dale Nielson from Ephraim, Utah, whose deep thinking and adherence to the ideals of the Church, combined with a willingness to work, won him the acclaim which resulted in his being elected president. At the same time Charles Lee from Salt Lake City, with all his ability to form and retain friendships everywhere he went, including the advantage of also having served a mission in the Southern States, was elected vice-president. Ivan Thomas was elected secretary and treasurer, Mervin Tanner, public relations manager, and Ben Leatham, music director. Each officer was privileged to appoint committees to act in behalf of his duties if he found it necessary.

With the Three M Club now on an executive basis it was ready for action. Music director Ben Leatham immediately began searching for talent, with the result that a chorus was formed, a quartet selected, and a soloist discovered.

The surrounding wards had already heard of the Three M Club and its indications, and were asking that it participate in their meetings. With all the returned missionaries and talent it was not difficult to assign speakers among the members. The first request came from Bishop Beckstrand of the San Jose Ward to take charge and present the program for sacrament meeting. Fired with enthusiasm at the success of this first undertaking, the Mormon Men of Moffett felt their club was destined to become a great success.

In the three months this club has been functioning, it has participated in numerous Latter-day Saint functions from San Jose to Berkeley, California, including the wards in San Francisco. To date Three M Club activities include participation in Sunday schools, sacrament meetings, Mutual meetings, and other social functions. Club members have even volunteered for ward teaching.

One of the biggest undertakings of the Three M Club was the successful presentation in eight wards of the play "Defense" as prescribed by the Mutual Manual.

The Three M Club has brought the Mormon Men of Moffett together in one common bond of ideals and beliefs, cemented by lasting friendships. It has encouraged them to attend Church functions regularly, and to take part willingly. It has furnished them with clean wholesome recreation, and given them opportunity to make friends with people of high and lasting ideals.

The Three M Club has kept the ideals and conceptions which were taught at home, burning in Moffett's Mormon heart.

It will not be long now until Moffett Field will be broken up and the Mormon Men of Moffett scattered far and wide. But this will not mean the end of the Three M Club. Instead those who are sent to other fields will form new clubs, and instead of dying it will be added upon.